

Unit 1: Psychology

The Q Classroom

Activity B., Page 2

Teacher: Class, the Unit Question is: "How does language affect who we are?" So maybe we can start by talking about ourselves. How about you, Marcus? Do you think you would be a different person if you had a different first language?

Marcus: Yes, in some ways I would be.

Teacher: Why?

Marcus: Our language is part of our culture. The way we express ourselves reflects the things we care about. Sometimes there are things that I feel just can't be said as well in English.

Sophy: I don't think that's true, though. I think you can say anything in any language. You just feel more comfortable with how to say it in your native language.

Teacher: What do you think, Felix? How does language affect who we are?

Felix: I agree with Marcus. I think some things are easier to express in some languages than in others. Take showing respect, for example. In my native language, there are certain verb forms that you can use when you're talking to an older person that help you show respect, but in English that's difficult to do. You speak the same way to everyone. It made me uncomfortable when I first started speaking English.

Sophy: But you can show respect in English, just not with verb forms. You use more formal language, you don't contract as much, and that kind of thing. It's just different.

Teacher: Interesting. Would you like to add something, Yuna? How would you say language affects who we are?

Yuna: I think that for all people their language is very important to who they are. In Korea, our

spoken language and our writing system are important parts of our culture.

LISTENING 1 My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey

Activity A., C., Pages 6, 7

David Inge, Host: Good morning. Welcome to the second hour of *Focus 580*. This is our morning talk program; my name's David Inge. . . . In this hour of *Focus 580* we'll be talking with Jill Bolte Taylor; she is a neuroanatomist. She's affiliated with the Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis. And back in 1996, she was teaching and doing research at the Harvard Medical School when she had a stroke, a very serious and severe stroke. On that day, as she writes in her book *My Stroke of Insight*, on that day she woke up with a sharp pain behind one eye. She tried to get on with her usual morning activities, but clearly she knew something was very wrong. She wasn't sure what. Uh, instead of finding answers or information, she writes she "met with a growing sense of peace." She writes that she felt "enfolded by a blanket of **tranquil** euphoria." We should talk a little bit more about the, the **structure** of the brain, and, and I think that probably people have an idea in, in their head of what the brain looks like. And that I think the thing that people think about as being the brain is in fact the cortex, the cerebral—

Jill Bolte Taylor: Right.

Inge: —cortex, which is that part of the brain that sets us apart from a lot of other living things and in fact maybe sets us apart in degree from other mammals as well. Uh, and maybe also people are used to the idea that it has two halves, right and left, and that the two halves are different. So, talk a little bit about that, the structure of the brain at that level, and the two halves, the right and the left, and what makes them different.

Taylor: Well, they process information in, in different kinds of ways, um, but of course they're always both working all at the same time. So as you look out into the world right now, whatever your **perception** is, you, you have choices. You can look first at the big picture of the room and not really focus in on any of the details. And the right hemisphere looks at things for the big picture. It blends the, softens the **boundaries** between things so that you take in the bigger picture of the room. Is this a really lovely room? Is this a great room? Um, and you just have the **overall** perception. If you're at the beach, um, you look out over the, the, um, horizon and you look out over the water, and, and you, you allow yourself to feel expansive, and that's the bigger picture of everything. The left hemisphere, then, is going to—and it's all in the present moment. The right hemisphere is all about right here, right now. And then the left hemisphere is going to take that big picture and it's going to start picking out the details. So if you're at the beach, now it's going to start looking at the kinds of clouds, and it's going to label them and it's going to look at the whitecaps and label them, and it's going to look at the kinds of grains in the sand and label them. And everything now starts working into language and the details that we can then communicate with, so it's looking—and, and, and in order to do that, it's going to compare things to things that we've learned in the past, and it's going to project images into the future. The right hemisphere thinks the big picture in pictures. The left hemisphere thinks the details using language, so the two hemispheres work together constantly for us to have a normal perspective. And, and on the morning of my hemorrhage, I lost the left hemisphere, which lost my language, it lost my ability to associate or relate anything to the **external** world or to

communicate either creating language or understanding other people's language. But what I gained was this experience of the present moment and the expansiveness, so, so they're, they're very different ways of perceiving the world. And most of us, you know, I think we can identify that there are these two very different parts of ourselves and that we use them together. I just had the opportunity to lose the detail of the left hemisphere so that I could really just experience the right hemisphere untethered to the left hemisphere.

Inge: Our guest on this hour of *Focus 580*, Jill Bolte Taylor; she's a neuroanatomist. And of course questions are welcome. Line 1. Hello.

Caller: Hello.

Inge: Yes.

Caller: I find this **fascinating**. I'm, I'm an experimental psychologist, retired. And, um, there's an old, uh, out of the behavioristic tradition, you know, they believed that **consciousness** was intrinsically tied to language. And it sounds like that's out the window now because you evidently didn't lose consciousness and, uh, because you—but you did lose your language. But what I'm interested in, is did you lose the concept of future and past? It sounds like you were living entirely in the present. Is that true or not?

Inge: All right.

Taylor: Thank you. Yeah. No, that's a great question. I did lose my perception of past and future when I had that hemorrhage in the left hemisphere, and I lost all of the consciousness of the language center. I lost the portion of my brain that said, "I am an individual. I am Jill Bolte Taylor. These are all the data connected to me." These are all the memories associated with who I had been and when that person went offline, which is the best way for me to explain it, I lost all of her likes and dislikes, and I didn't—but I was still completely conscious.

And in the process of **recovery**, I essentially had to say that woman died that day, and I was now an infant in a woman's body. And this new consciousness was going to **regain** the **function** of the left hemisphere, but I was not going to regain being whom I had been before. So, um, uh, I love your perspective on it. At the, at the same time I, I see it as, as, just as far as language is concerned, picture yourself as a, a purely English-speaking person and then you wake up one day and you're in the heart of China where nobody speaks any English whatsoever, so you're no longer dependent on the language. You're dependent on having a heightening of your other experiences, the inflection of voice and facial expression, and, and you're, you're really in the present moment, then, in order to gain information about what, where, where you're at and what you have to do. So we do function; there's a whole part of us that is non-language, and once that language goes off, I was still a whole human being, even though I didn't have my language center and the rest of my left hemisphere was, was swimming in a pool of blood. I still had the experience that I was perfect and whole and beautiful just the way that I was even though I only had part of my, my mind functioning.

LISTENING SKILL Making inferences

Activity A., Page 11

- 1. Inge:** The thing that people think about as being the brain is in fact the cortex, the cerebral cortex, which is that part of the brain that sets us apart from a lot of other living things . . .
- 2. Taylor:** The right hemisphere thinks the big picture in pictures. The left hemisphere thinks the details using language, so the two hemispheres work together constantly for us to have a normal perspective.

3. Taylor: I just had the opportunity to lose the detail of the left hemisphere so that I could really just experience the right hemisphere untethered to the left hemisphere.

4. Taylor: At the same time I, I see it as, as, just as far as language is concerned, picture yourself as a purely English-speaking person and then you wake up one day and you're in the heart of China where nobody speaks any English whatsoever, so you're no longer dependent on the language. You're dependent on having a heightening of your other experiences, the inflection of voice and facial expression, and, and you're, you're really in the present moment, then, in order to gain information about what, where, where you're at and what you have to do.

NOTE-TAKING SKILL

Activity A., B., Page 12

M: During the first year of life, children learn words as they hear them repeated by their parents. A great deal of language learning goes on between the ages of 15 to 24 months. By the age of 18 months, most children know about 50 words. By their second birthday, they can use 250 to 300 words. This number nearly doubles in the following 6 months.

LISTENING 2 The Story of My Life

Activity A., C., Pages 14, 15

Helen Keller: I cannot recall what happened during the first months after my illness. I only know that I sat in my mother's lap or clung to her dress as she went about her household duties. My hands felt every object and observed every motion, and in this way I learned to know many things. Soon I felt the need of some communication with others and began to make crude signs. A shake of the head meant "No" and a nod, "Yes." A pull meant "Come" and a

push, "Go." Was it bread that I wanted? Then I would **imitate** the acts of cutting the slices and buttering them. If I wanted my mother to make ice cream for dinner, I made the sign for working the freezer and shivered, indicating cold. My mother, moreover, succeeded in making me understand a good deal. I always knew when she wished me to bring her something, and I would run upstairs or anywhere else she indicated. Indeed, I owe to her loving wisdom all that was bright and good in my long night. . . .

I do not remember when I first realized that I was different from other people, but I knew it before my teacher came to me. I had noticed that my mother and my friends did not use signs as I did when they wanted anything done, but talked with their mouths. Sometimes I stood between two persons who were conversing and touched their lips. I could not understand and was vexed. I moved my lips and **gesticulated** frantically without result. This made me so angry at times that I kicked and screamed until I was exhausted. . . .

Many **incidents** of those early years are fixed in my memory, isolated, but clear and distinct, making the sense of that silent, aimless, dayless life all the more **intense**. . . .

Meanwhile, the desire to express myself grew. The few signs I used became less and less **adequate**, and my failures to make myself understood were **invariably** followed by **outbursts** of passion. I felt as if invisible hands were holding me, and I made frantic efforts to free myself. I struggled—not that struggling helped matters, but the spirit of resistance was strong within me; I generally broke down in tears and physical exhaustion. If my mother happened to be near, I crept into her arms, too miserable even to remember the cause of the tempest. After a while, the need of some means

of communication became so urgent that these outbursts occurred daily, sometimes hourly. . . . The most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. I am filled with wonder when I consider the immeasurable contrasts between the two lives which it connects. It was the third of March, 1887, three months before I was seven years old. On the afternoon of that eventful day, I stood on the porch, dumb, expectant. I guessed vaguely from my mother's signs and from the hurrying to and fro in the house, that something unusual was about to happen, so I went to the door and waited on the steps. The afternoon sun penetrated the mass of honeysuckle that covered the porch, and fell on my upturned face. My fingers lingered almost unconsciously on the familiar leaves and blossoms which had just come forth to greet the sweet southern spring. I did not know what the future held of marvel or surprise for me. Anger and bitterness had preyed upon me continually for weeks, and a deep languor had succeeded this passionate struggle.

Have you ever been at sea in a dense fog, when it seemed as if a **tangible** white darkness shut you in, and the great ship, tense and anxious, groped her way toward the shore with plummet and sounding line, and you waited with beating heart for something to happen? I was like that ship before my education began, only I was without compass or sounding line, and had no way of knowing how near the harbor was.

"Light! Give me light!" was the wordless cry of my soul, and the light of love shone on me in that very hour.

I felt approaching footsteps, I stretched out my hand as I supposed to my mother. Someone took it, and I was caught up and held close in the arms of her who had come to **reveal** all

things to me, and more than all things else, to love me.

The morning after my teacher came she led me into her room and gave me a doll. The little blind children at the Perkins Institution had sent it . . . but I did not know this until afterward. When I had played with it a little while, Miss Sullivan slowly spelled into my hand the word "d-o-l-l." I was at once interested in this finger play and tried to imitate it.

When I finally succeeded in making the letters correctly I was flushed with childish pleasure and pride. Running downstairs to my mother, I held up my hand and made the letters for *doll*. I did not know that I was spelling a word or even that words existed; I was simply making my fingers go in monkey-like imitation. In the days that followed I learned to spell in this uncomprehending way a great many words, among them *pin*, *hat*, *cup* and a few verbs like *sit*, *stand*, and *walk*. But my teacher had been with me several weeks before I understood that everything has a name. . . .

Miss Sullivan had tried to impress it upon me that "m-u-g" is mug and that "w-a-t-e-r" is water, but I **persisted** in confounding the two. In despair, she had dropped the subject for the time, only to renew it at the first opportunity. I became impatient at her repeated attempts, and seizing the new doll, I dashed it upon the floor. I was keenly delighted when I felt the **fragments** of the broken doll at my feet.

Neither sorrow nor regret followed my passionate outburst. I had not loved the doll. In the still, dark world in which I lived, there was no strong **sentiment** or tenderness. I felt my teacher sweep the fragments to one side of the hearth, and I had a sense of satisfaction that the cause of my discomfort was removed. She brought me my hat, and I knew I was going out into the warm sunshine. This thought, if a

wordless sensation may be called a thought, made me hop and skip with pleasure.

We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Someone was drawing water, and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand, she spelled into the other the word *water*, first slowly, then rapidly.

I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers.

Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought—and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that "w-a-t-e-r" meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul; gave it light, hope, joy; set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

I left the well-house eager to learn. Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. . . . I learned a great many new words that day. I do not remember what they all were; but I do know that *mother*, *father*, *sister*, *teacher* were among them—words that were to make the world blossom for me, "like Aaron's rod, with flowers." It would have been difficult to find a happier child than I was as I lay in my crib at the close of that eventful day and lived over the joys it had brought me and for the first time longed for a new day to come. . . .

I recall many incidents of the summer of 1887 that followed my soul's sudden awakening. I did nothing but explore with my hands and learn the name of every object that I touched and the more I handled things and learned their names and uses, the more joyous and confident grew my sense of kinship with the rest of the world.

PRONUNCIATION: Emphatic Word Stress

Page 23

EXAMPLE 1

She's a SCIENTIST.

She was COMPLETELY CONSCIOUS.

He was RESPONSIBLE.

She ISOLATED herself.

EXAMPLE 2

A: She's a SCIENTIST?

B: No, she's a DENTIST.

A: Are you afraid of oral reports?

B: YES! I NEVER take SPEAKING classes.

A: Can Gary speak MANDARIN?

B: HE can't, but LISA can.

Activity A., Pages 23–24

Taylor: Then I would have this wave of clarity that would bring me and reattach me back to normal reality, and I could pursue my plan, and my—the only plan that I had in my head was to call work and that somebody at work would get me help. Um, but it—it took, uh, over 45 minutes for me to figure out what number to dial and how to dial and by the time, um, I got the information I could not see uh the, the phone number on my business card. I couldn't pick the numbers out from the background pixels, cause all I could see were pixels. Uh, and it's a you know, it's a, big drama. By the time my colleague, I'm very fortunate he was at his desk. I spoke. I said "Woo Woo Woo Er" I had no, no language and when he spoke to me he sounded "Woo Woo Wer." He sounded like a golden retriever. So, uh, but he did recognize that it was I and that I needed help and then eventually he did get me help.